

SIDDHIS IN THE YOGASŪTRAS AND SAUNDARYA LAHARĪ

The term « *siddhi* » connotes supernatural or uncommon powers attained through supernatural or uncommon means. It is proposed to present a study of the extent and the pattern of such siddhis as found in the *Yogasūtras* of Patañjali and *Saundaryalaharī* (of Śaṅkarācārya). The study is limited to the siddhis explicitly enumerated in the texts, rather than the traditionally implied mystic/tantric significance of each and every unit of the *mantras* considered to be the embodiment of *Siddhis*.

Yoga, as defined in the *Yogasūtras* is nothing but the Control¹ of the feelings and intellectual activities of the mind. This can be achieved by long and uninterrupted faithful efforts combined with a spirit of detachment/renunciation or by devotion² to God or by concentration³ of mind on any object of choice. There are eight⁴ components of yogic practices, viz. (i) five *yamas* (viz. *ahiṃsā* « nonviolence », *satya* « truthfulness », *asteya* « restraint from covetousness », *brahmacarya* « celibacy », *aparigraha* « nonaccumulation » (ii) five *niyamas* (viz. *śauca* « cleanliness », *santoṣa* « contentment », *tapas* « penance », *svādhyāya* « study », *īśvarapraṇidhāna* meditation on God), (iii) *āsana* (bodily posture), (iv) *prāṇāyāma* (control of breath), (v) *pratyāhāra* (control of sense organs in a reverse order), (vi) *dhāraṇā* (location of mind at one fixed point), (vii) *dhyāna* (meditation), (viii) *samādhi* (a detached state of mind). Of these, the *yamas*⁵ are stated to be the « Practices-in-chief » (*mahāvratas*) which are universal in nature (*sārvabhauma*), irrespective of caste, region, time etc.

1. YS 1, 2.

2. *Id.*, 1, 12, 14.

3. *Id.*, 1, 23.

4. *Id.*, 2, 29.

5. *Id.*, 2, 31, « *ete jātideśakālasamayānavacchināḥ sārvaḥauma mahāvratam* ».

Thus, with the control of mental faculties as its central theme, the Pātañjala Yogadarśana deals with the various devices and other relevant details conducive to yoga. It is in this context that the *siddhis* are also mentioned as subsidiary items that appear automatically in the course of yogic practices. Take for example the *siddhis* of the *yama* practices.

Even ⁶ enemies lose the very sense of enmity before a practitioner of non-violence. A practitioner ⁷ of truthfulness attains a power through which things will happen as he says. Practice ⁸ of restraint from covetousness (*asteya*) leads to the accumulation of all precious gems in the practitioner's home! But practice ⁹ of non-accumulation (*aparigraha*) results in the knowledge of the genesis of the present and future lives. Celebacy ¹⁰ (*brahmacharya*) leads to physical and intellectual invincibility.

Patañjali ^{10a} enumerates the various *siddhis* in the *Vibhūtipāda* (ch. 3), while dealing with the last three constituents of yoga, viz. *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi* culminating in *saṁyama* (concentration). These *siddhis* (thirty-in-number) depend on the concentration of mind on the specific objects. For example, if one concentrates on the distinctive character of words, meanings and the objects represented by them, he can attain powers to understand the languages of all creatures. The following tabular statement will give, at a glance, a complete picture of the *siddhis* enumerated in this chapter:

(A) Concentration on	(B) Leads to
i. three causative factors of transformation of an object (<i>dharma, lakṣaṇa</i> and <i>avasthā</i>)	knowledge of past, present and future
ii. the word, the meaning and the object represented by them as three separate units	knowledge of languages of all creatures
iii. mental impressions	knowledge about previous birth
iv. mind of others	thought reading
v. the form of the body	invisibility

6. *Id.*, 2, 35-39.

7. *Id.*, 2, 35-39.

8. *Id.*, 2, 35-39.

9. *Id.*, 2, 35-39.

10. *Id.*, 2, 35-39.

10a. PATAÑJALI concentrates only on *Samādhiya siddhis* (out of the five types listed viz. *janmaja, auśadhija mantraja* and *samādhiya* vide YS IV.1.

11. *Id.*, 3, 16-19, 21-36, 38-49.

vi. the various aspects of past action	knowledge about the date and time of death
vii. <i>Maitrī, karuṇā, muditā, upekṣā</i>	accomplishment of absolute mental equilibrium
viii. strength	strength
ix. divine objects of senses or divine light	knowledge of subtle elements and hidden or distantly placed objects
x. the Sun	knowledge of the Universe
xi. the Moon	knowledge about the movement of stars
xii. the Pole star	knowledge of its movement
xiii. navel <i>cakra</i> (<i>Maṇipūra</i>)	knowledge about the composition of the body
xiv. cavity of the throat	freedom from hunger and thirst
xv. the inner aperture in the crown of the head	vision of invisible divine <i>siddhas</i>
xvi. intuition	omniscience
xvii. heart	knowledge about one's mind and the mind of others
xviii. true nature of <i>Prakṛti</i> and <i>Puruṣa</i>	knowledge of <i>Puruṣa</i>
xix. do	(followed by) enjoyment of the divine objects of sense organs
xx. movement of mind (from the heart through sense organs) also control of the causative factors for bondage	entry into another body (living or dead)
xxi. <i>udāna vāyu</i>	uninterrupted movement even through water, marshy land, thorns etc.
xxii. <i>samāna vāyu</i>	brilliance like that of fire
xxiii. relationship between the ears and <i>ākāśa</i> (space)	divine ears

xxiv. relationship between the body and space (resulting in lightness resembling that of cotton)	flying in the sky
xxv. mental faculty devoid of bodily contact (<i>Mahāvideha</i>)	removal of the screen covering the divine light
xxvi. gross and subtle aspects of the five <i>mahābhūtas</i>	<i>bhūtajava</i> followed by the eight well-known <i>siddhis</i> (<i>ānimā, mahimā, laghimā, garimā, Prāpti, Prākāmya, īśitva, Vaśitva</i>)
xxvii. do	bodily excellence, immortality of the body
xxviii. the five stages of the movement of sense organs	<i>indriyajaya</i> followed by Velocity of the body like that of the mind and control of <i>Prakṛti</i>
xxix. do	do
xxx. distinctive nature of <i>Puruṣa</i> and <i>Prakṛti</i>	omniscience, omnipotence

It will be seen that all the thirty *siddhis* enumerated above depend on the concentration of mind (*Samyama*) on some specified objects or concepts. The Five *Yamas* also are basically dependent on a mental attitude towards life which enables the practitioner to be calm, non-violent and truthful as well as self-contented. It is this attitude that, according to Patañjali, brings to him the blissful atmosphere and omniscience all around.

But Patañjali always warns his yoga practitioners against being lost midway in the network of *Siddhis* which are considered to be obstacles (*upasargas*), to *samādhi*. The *Siddhis*¹² are their assets only in the post *samādhi* (*vyutthāna*) stage. Patañjali refers to several¹³ other material or divine attractions that strive to detract a practitioner from his main goal i.e. *cittavṛttinirodha* and prescribes vigilant precautions against such deviating situations.

It would be quite interesting to undertake a study of *bhāvanā* (Mental disposition i.e. concentration, meditation, thinking in a particular way leading to a specified accomplishment) in the various disciplines of Indian tradition. Looking at the Yogic prescription in the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa*^{13a}, we find that if a practitioner suffers from loss of memory, he should think of having a nail on his head and a piece of

12. *Id.*, 3, 37, « *samādhāv upasargā vyutthāne siddhayaḥ* ».

13. *Id.*, 3, 51.

13a. MP 31, 56-61; cf. MPE 56-61.

wood placed thereon being beaten by another piece of wood. When in a state of thirst, he may meditate on his tongue enjoying mango juice. When trembling, he may meditate on an immovable mountain. He should meditate on a cooling substance to get rid of heat and vice versa.

Coming to the *Sāundaryalaharī*, a Tantric text of *Samaya* School, we find that all the *Siddhis* automatically follow a devotee through the blessings of the Goddess. The *siddhis* stand¹⁴ at the gate of the Goddess. The three¹⁵ Gods create, protect and consolidate the Universe through the blessings of the dust of Her feet. The other gods bestow their blessings by hands. But the Goddess¹⁶ does not like to demonstrate Her generosity; Her feet alone bestow all blessings on a devotee. Cupid, the God of love rules the entire universe, despite his tender weapons and limited force, by virtue of Her blessings.

A devotee^{16a} of the Goddess is a master of learning and wealth, a competitor of Brahmā and Viṣṇu as it were; he fascinates even the wife of cupid by his charming personality; he is long-lived and is at the same time free from the worldly bondage, enjoying the Bliss par excellence.

Here again, concentration on or devotion to a specified form of the Goddess plays an important role in the attainment of specific *Siddhis*. Thus meditation¹⁷ on the white form of the Goddess with a string of crystal beads and books in Her hand leads to poetic excellence. Those who worship¹⁸ Her in the red form — red like the rays of the rising sun — attain perfection in poetic compositions of *Śṛṅgāra* and also succeed in winning over even the divine damsels. One who meditates on the *Kāmakaḷā*¹⁹ of the Goddess with certain specifications prescribed, can move all the three worlds (*Trilokī*). One who meditates²⁰ on the Goddess with Her abode in his heart, pouring out nectar-like soothing rays like those of the moon-gem (*candrakānta*), can do away with the poisonous effects of the snakes and can even cure a person suffering from fever by his mere look. One who identifies²¹ himself with the Goddess (being surrounded by the well-known eight *siddhis* or even otherwise) can excel even the gods and survive even the destruction of the age, to be worshipped by the lamps lit by the Fire of Destruction.

There²² is a reference to sixtyfour independent tantras corresponding to the sixtyfour *siddhis* that were earlier propounded by Lord Siva who

14. SL 95.

15. *Id.*, 2.

16. *Id.*, 4.

16a. *Id.*, 99.

17. *Id.*, 15, 17.

18. *Id.*, 16, 18.

19. *Id.*, 19; cf. SPL, pp. 45 f.

20. *Id.*, 20.

21. *Id.*, 22, 30.

22. *Id.*, 31.

being persuaded by the Goddess later brought to light one all embrative *Tantra* conducive to the fulfilment of all the four *Summa Bona* (*dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*) of life. Evidently something like « black magic » is being deplored here.

The upward^{22a} and downward movements of kuṇḍalinī are mentioned in greater details. She sleeps in the lowest *Mūlādhārācakra* and when aroused through concentrated practice she goes up through the *Maṇipūra*, *svādhiṣṭhāna*, *Anāhata*, *Viśuddhi*, and *Ājñācakras* and finally unites with Parama Śiva in the highest *sahasrārācakra* bestowing blissful experience par excellence to the devotees.

The final²³ stage of devotion leading to siddhi is represented by the mental attitude of the devotee who identifies himself and all his thinking, words and actions with the Goddess and Her will and directions. Even his prayers are compared to the drops of water from the Ocean being offered to the Ocean itself.

Thus concentration on a particular object or form, visible or imaginative as conducive to the *Siddhis* is common both to Yogic and Tantric traditions, as revealed from a study of the *Yogasūtras* and the *Sāundaryalaharī*. But while a Yogic Practitioner accepts siddhis as byproducts or subsidiary items, a Tantric devotee does not discriminate between *bhukti* and *mukti*, both of which represent the blessings of the Goddess.

As a matter of fact both Yoga and Tantra aim at the eradication of human miseries. While the emphasis in Yoga is on knowledge of *Puruṣa* as distinguished from *Prakṛti*, the Tantra tackles the same problem by identifying *Prakṛti* (*Śakti*) with *Puruṣa* (Paramaśiva). The former, both in siddhis and sādhanas engages itself in pursuit of knowledge par excellence in order to subjugate the limitations of ordinary knowledge and human experience. The latter strives for Blissful experience all around, without discriminating between material and spiritual aspects of the life and the universe. This is reflected in the extent and pattern of *siddhis* in the two disciplines as found in the two texts mentioned above.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND ABBREVIATIONS

- YS = *Yogasūtram*, by MAHARṢI PATAÑJALI, with six commentaries, Varanasi, 1930.
 SL = *Sāundaryalaharī*, with nine Sanskrit commentaries and Hindi, Tamil and English translations etc., Tiruchirapalli, 1976.
 MP = *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, vol. 1, with Hindi translation, ed. Pt. Śrīrama Śarma Acharya, Bareilly, 1969.
 MPE = *The Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, translated with notes by F. EDEN PARGITER, Varanasi, 1969.
 SP = *The Serpent Power*, by SIR JOHN WOODROFFE, Madras, 1973.

22a. *Id.*, 8, 10, 36-41; cf. SP, pp. 125 f.

23. SL 27, 100.